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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines as to be able to communicate operation signals necessary for progress of a competition game and administration of progression of competition games in a tournament made up of a plurality of rounds, comprising:

participation receiving means for receiving participation in the competition game from the game terminal units,

combination generating means for fitting participating terminal units of the game terminal units, which are game terminal units whose participation was received by the participation receiving means, into combinations of the participating game terminal units for the competition game tournament in accordance with a specified rule,

competition starting means for allotting one game space to one combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination generating means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the competition games in the respective rounds,

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competition ending means for instructing the participating terminal units to

end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for

competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the

semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance

with dominance in progression of the competition games when the competitions are

ended,

the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality

of winds,

proceeding means for proceeding with the competition game in accordance

with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile to discard

of a tile,

rank storage means for storing ranks of the players representing strengths

of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with

identification information of the players, and

discarding-time storage means for storing a tile discarding time for each

rank, wherein :

the participation receiving means receives the identification

information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the

received identification information of the players from the rank

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storage means, and the proceeding means reads the tile discarding

time corresponding to the rank read by the participation receiving

means from the discarding-time storage means, and conducts the

competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time;

and

the proceeding means is configured to receive time extension

operation information from a participating terminal unit to effect

extending the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit

by a specified time amount, and the proceeding means extends the

tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by the

specified time amount in response to receiving the time extension

operation information if a number of times the time extension

operation information is received from the participating terminal

unit is equal to or less than a predetermined number of times.

2. (Original) A game progress administering system according to claim 1,

further comprising participating terminal number counting means for counting a

participating terminal number, which is the number of the participating terminal

units, by counting up the participating terminal number every time the participation

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in the competition game is received by the participation receiving means and by

resetting the participating terminal number to 0 if the participating terminal number

has coincided with a maximum participating terminal number, which is the total

number of the game terminal units constituting the competition game tournament

or if a predetermined time has lapsed after a timing at which the participating

terminal number was changed from 0 to 1, wherein:

the competition starting means instructs the participating terminal units to

start the competition games at a timing when the participating terminal number is

reset by the participating terminal number counting means, and

the combination generating means fits the participating terminal units in the

combinations of the competition game tournament again after a timing at which the

participating terminal number is reset by the participating terminal number

counting means.

3. (Original) A game progress administering system according to claim 2,

further comprising combination interval setting means for setting the predetermined

time in accordance with date and hour.

4. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according

to claim 2, wherein the combination generating means allots game terminal units

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to be virtually operated by CPU players as lacking game terminal units if the

participating terminal number falls short of the maximum participating terminal

number upon the lapse of the predetermined time.

5. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according

to claim 1, wherein the combination generating means fits the participating

terminal units into the combinations of the competition game tournament so that

the numbers of the participating terminal units fitted in the respective combinations

of the competition game tournament substantially coincide with each other.

6. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according

to claim 1, wherein the competition ending means instructs the participating

terminal units to end the competition at a point of time when the progress status of

the competition game becomes a predetermined status when no time limit is set for

the final round.

7. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according

to claim 1, wherein:

the competition game is played by three or a larger specified number of

competitors,

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the game progress administering system further comprises winner number

setting means for setting a number of winners in one combination made up of the

specified number of competitors for each round, and

the competition ending means determines the number of winners set by the

winner number setting means.

8-9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according

to claim 1, wherein the higher the rank, the shorter the tile discarding time to be

set in the discarding-time storage means.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended)   A game progress administering method using

a game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated

by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines and

configured to communicate operation signals necessary for progress of a game and

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progressions of competition games of the game in a tournament made up of a

plurality of rounds, the game progress administering method comprising:

a participation receiving process for receiving participation in the

competition game from the game terminal units,

a combination generating process for fitting participating terminal units of

the game terminal units, which are game terminal units whose participation was

received by the participation receiving process, into combinations of the

participating game terminal units for the competition game tournament in

accordance with a specified rule,

a competition starting process for allotting one game space to one

combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination

generating means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the

competition games in the respective rounds,

a competition ending process for instructing the participating terminal units

to end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for

competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the

semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance

with dominance in progression of the competition games when the competitions are

ended.

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the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality

of winds,

a proceeding process for proceeding with the competition game in

accordance with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile

to discard of a tile,

a rank storage process for storing ranks of the players representing

strengths of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with

identification information of the players, and

a discarding-time storage process for storing a tile discarding time for each

rank, wherein :

the participation receiving process receives the identification

information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the

received identification information of the players from the rank

storage process, and the proceeding process reads the tile discarding

time corresponding to the rank read by the participation receiving

process from the discarding-time storage process, and conducts the

competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time;

and

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the proceeding process is configured to receive time extension operation information from a participating terminal unit to effect extending the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by a specified time amount, and the proceeding process extends the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by the specified time amount in response to receiving the time extension operation information if a number of times the time extension operation information is received from the participating terminal unit is equal to or less than a predetermined number of times.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable recording medium storing a game progress administering program for a game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines to communicate operation signals necessary for progress of a competition game and administration of progression of competition games in a tournament made up of a plurality of rounds, the game progress administering program causing the game progress administering system to function as:

participation receiving means for receiving participation in the competition game from the game terminal units,

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combination generating means for fitting participating terminal units of the game terminal units, which are game terminal units whose participation was received by the participation receiving means, into combinations of the participating game terminal units for the competition game tournament in accordance with a specified rule,

competition starting means for allotting one game space to one combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination generating means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the competition games in the respective rounds,

competition ending means for instructing the participating terminal units to end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance with dominance in progression of the competition games when the competitions are ended,

the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality of winds,

proceeding means for proceeding with the competition game in accordance with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile to discard of a tile,

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rank storage means for storing ranks of the players representing strengths

of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with

identification information of the players, and

discarding-time storage means for storing a tile discarding time for each

rank, wherein :

the participation receiving means receives the identification

information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the

received identification information of the players from the rank

storage means, and the proceeding means reads the tile discarding

time corresponding to the rank read by the participation receiving

means from the discarding-time storage means, and conducts the

competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time;

and

the proceeding means is configured to receive time extension

operation information from a participating terminal unit to effect

extending the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit

by a specified time amount, and the proceeding means extends the

tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by the

specified time amount in response to receiving the time extension

operation information if a number of times the time extension

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operation information is received from the participating terminal

unit is equal to or less than a predetermined number of times.

14. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable recording medium
according to claim 13, wherein:

said proceeding means reads from the discarding time storage means tile
discarding times corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game
terminal units from which the participating receiving means receives participation;
and

said proceeding means conducts the competition game in accordance with
the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players
is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player,
wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are
shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.

15. (Previously Presented) The game progress administering method
according to claim 12 wherein:

said proceeding process reads from the discarding time storage process tile
discarding times corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game

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terminal units from which the participating receiving process receives participation;

and

said proceeding process conducts the competition game in accordance with the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player, wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.

16. (Previously Presented) The game progress administering system according to claim 1, wherein:

said proceeding means reads from the discarding time storage means tile discarding times each corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game terminal units from which the participating receiving means receives participation; and

said proceeding means conducts the competition game in accordance with the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player, wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.

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    17. (Cancelled)

    18. (Cancelled)

    19. (Cancelled)

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